88

Charleston

1917 June

Nov 15

My Billy.

Thank you very much for sending the shoes. I send you a cheque for it. They are perfect for the children as they don't slip off. If I want some for myself when the weather gets colder I will ask you to get me some too. Do you think you could do another little commission for me about which there is no hurry - to get me some of that gut for necklaces when you happen to be passing the shop?

No. I didn't go to Ashcham at all - of course not.

They came here 2 or 3 times
& seemed a little melancholy
I thought. It seemed to me
that perhaps it was rather
hard on Nick that Saxon
stayed in all the time.
He must have wanted to
have at least a few days
alone with Barbara -
But of course they were
all much too nice even
to hint at such a thing.
Have you begun to enjoy
Barbara yet & how does
it do?

Do write & tell us about
your visit to Sassoon
I shall be very curious to
hear what you think
of that household.

I hear that Adrian is
allowed to do clerical work
for the Plutheimers for
3 months at any rate.

& is then to get another
certificate. So he is all
right I suppose. He seems
to think the doctor wont
let him go back to
agricultural work.
I am hoping to start
my new educational scheme
but I suppose everyone will
think it crazy. But the
governess system is a
hopeless one I think. It
will be practically impossible
to have anyone in the house
in that position. any
female at least. It is too
much to trust & to risk.
Write & tell me some
gossip soon & remember
your poor sister in the
depths of the country with
winter coming on
Yours V B

(89)

Charleston

(1917)

4 December

Tuesday

My Billy.

Why don't you write to me every day? I suppose you think it would be much fun to do so unless you got something in return beyond the satisfaction & interest you'd excite at this end. What could I give? An occasional picture? I know letters from the country would be much return. Even had I the wits to write them But really its a waste not to write to me more often & you'd soon get into the habit of it. Every day at the same time you'd say to yourself "I owe for that

well. I thank you for the necklace stuff. & for your letter. I'm coming to London on Friday but only for one night so I suppose I very likely shan't see you. I'm going to see my fiancée new sovereign at Rogers at 6. which makes things difficult, unless you could promptly come to tea at Eredon Sq at 4.30 first? If you sent me a card there I should get it. My new governess is Mrs Brereton. an old flame of Rogers. at least she once looked after Helen. She's a clergyman's wife. separated from her husband. self. supporting. with 2 children. She writes & feels things in the Westminster. according to Rogers is a nice character.

of solitary evenings. I dont know of course yet what they like. But after 6 weeks. I Miss Edwards, I feel inclined to jump at anyone who's a tolerably nice character & independent. Miss E. has turned out to be quite impossible. But it's rather awful. She doesn't want to go & hasn't yet got another place. However I suppose she will get one. I'll tell you all my domestic troubles however when I see you.

It has been freezing cold here again. & we seem to be in the midst of last winter once more. Only everything is worse. Food dearer, coal more difficult to come by etc. We have just been presented at Mrs Lister Kaye's [illegible]

of keeping a pig - but Thorne
Wise has just been home for
Mabel's wedding has awful
stories of how one has to fill
up innumerable papers
before one can do so & then
has to give half the pig to
the butcher when its killed.
However I cant believe that
& I expect we shall get one.
It's certainly beginning to get
very much like a seige.
I wish you were in the country
with preserved eggs in your
larder & food running about
in the fields.
I wonder why I disposed of
"Barnes" so. I cant remember
having any feeling about her
nor can I remember Adams
at all. Poor Barnes - she
certainly doesnt suffer from
the self assurance of age now.
Have you seen [illegible] & yellow
parakeets

(91)

Jan 1918
13th

Charleston

Sunday

My Billy.

A most lovely green spectacle case has come which is the joy of my life. I have tied a crimson ribbon to it & now feel sure it can't fail to catch my eye in whatever dark corner I may leave it. It is very kind of you to do such jobs. My watch I fear did not keep time again Duncan is evidently cracked he thinks. But I daresay he really didn't mind it! Perhaps you had better keep it till I next come to London when I can take it back.

Mrs Brereton & her daughter
Anne arrived on Friday.
Mrs B. is quiet. sensible &
very easy to get on with. I
hope, shall be what I wish
for the children. as I think
she'll keep them in better
order than either Miss Edwards
or Mabel had done for a
long time. However she hasn't
been here long enough for me
to be able to tell much about
her yet. We have already
discussed the religious question.
She believes in nothing. but
Anne has to be brought up
to go to church etc. so she'll
probably go to take all the
children to church occasionally
to which I don't object as
long as they don't learn

its all gospel truth. In fact I daresay its a good thing to see something of church life as long as one doesn't do it if one's simply bored. I hope you'll come soon & see what you think of the new establishment that project you have promised to. Also I hope another instalment of journal is coming soon. Are you head at work printing now? Its very lovely here & not so cold. I hope the snow drops will be coming up soon: meanwhile I am trying to get the strawberry bed into order & am learning to prune apple trees. I am thinking of getting a lad from Glynde to come & put me into order. I hope

you're getting enough to eat
Meat has been very scarce
here & it's really very hard
work to keep the large
household supplied as you
can imagine. A joint does
appear in our time. It all
sounds very domesticated doesn't
it but as a matter of fact
I hope soon to be really very
free to paint. I think in
time I shall shift everything
into Mrs Brereton's & Fiona
even the Apes. They'll be
well looked after if they come
by me or other of my house
& children keepers. Quentin
is fonder than ever since he went
to Askham of "yellow jokes" like
Aunt Fiona's. You had an awful effect
on him. Love KB

(92)

Charleston

(1918)

Jan 21

My Billy.
I wish you absolutely
fascinating account of every
one & everything had not been
stopped by fears for our
healths. We are all happily
recovered. except Anne B.
who has now gone & bed
with what I suppose is
influenza. But will bear
up under that. I think
we all had it in a sub.
shed form but I'st mine
worse by getting cold going
to Lewes one pouring wet
day & send Henry to
Adrian. No one else could
so & they had arranged to
meet him at Victoria.
For [illegible] days in

bed last week with regular
influenza aches & pains
& I'm now all right again
up & about & no thoughts
of me need prevent you
from writing reams of
gossip. In fact I'm still
just invalidish enough
to gloat over your letter by
the fire & envy it to
the full. (with my mate Duncan cant
get over the fact that his
watch goes when its wound
up. As for mine you'd
be an angel if you'd take
it some day. The name
of the man I believe is
Palmer. (that may not
be quite accurate but its
very near) Barbara can tell
you [illegible]

she went there & can tell
in just what part of
Poland St he lives.
The white paint we are
deeply grateful for. Shall I
send you a cheque if you'll
tell me how much it is?
Perhaps you could keep it
till I see you.
What other kind & unselfish
acts have you done? White
paint - - - - the watch
you haven't taken - -
I daresay a lot were forgotten
when you were led astray
to describe Mrs Rotherin's
conversation. But that was
such a kind & unselfish
act that it may count as
Oh. the town
Thank you

come some day.

Oh dear. How I have enjoyed your gossip. I don't know what has enthralled me most. Can I really face the 17 Club with Babs & the rest of them? I think I'd rather get at it through you. Maynard was here for Sunday & curiously enough we all agreed to pursue the same tactics as yours with regard to Nick. whom we decided could if he liked occupy an exactly similar or slightly superior position to Barbara herself in Bloomsbury. As for old Saxon I really should be furiously wildly jealous of him. for one could do nothing.

One accept

to beat him with. & he would impose his impossible Cambridge Bloomsbury standard with complete disregard of Love & Life. However if he attains to fucking & B. within another 6 months. I shall forgive him much & see hope for him. Perhaps he has already done so. What do you think? Nick I believe will shortly realize his ambition & be asked to dinner by Maynard.

By the way, to show how foolish those young are— the other night I said that education really wasn't important - I wasn't educated. all me wanted from a Bunny was that it should know itself to be a Bunny. etc.. But at the same time I admitted of course in some ways I was better educated - for instance

I could spell. & if I were in Barbara's place I could divide words in the right place. So Maynard put me through a small spelling examination & I couldn't spell me at all difficult word! So even that boast must be given up. & yet do I mind? So why should they? Now if Marjorie Strachey couldn't spell & had never heard of Erasmus perhaps Bloomsbury wouldn't look at her. But the Bunnies will be looked at as long as they're young & never listened to however much they may acquaint themselves with Tom Jones & Macaulay. Poor things. They'd save themselves hours of boredom if they only knew it.

We're so respectable now.
you'd hardly know us.
Mrs Brereton sits at the end of
the table by Julian. She keeps
a strict eye on table manners
& gives marks for good
ones. She has husky grey
hair. is rather ugly. Kind.
severe. I am alarmed but
relieved at being able to
leave all authority to her.
The children I think are
also really relieved at having
someone in authority. Julian
can no longer argue to the
bones as to why he should not
fidget at table when grown.
ups do. but is just told
he's not to & that's all there
is about it. I could never
take that line but I believe
its the right one & I'm
thankful to get someone else

to do it.

Do, for God's sake, be careful about what you say to Lady Strachey - Remember she's not up to date in morals. has never heard of buggery - at any rate not in her own family. you have the wildest ideas about such things.

Now be good about my lost parroquet. Dont go sing him lumps of sugar & then leave him moulting & remember the lonely caged bird in Hammersmith needs a mate - while you need nothing of the kind.

Of course I'm still quite ill enough to need gossip to cheer me up. you know influenza has a very depressing after effect. your VB

(93)

Charleston

(1918)

Feb 13

My Billy.

How are you? Please write & tell me or ask Leonard to. Its really absurd that you should send me mail. etc when evidently you want them yourself more than I do. But I don't follow the Fisher plan of sending them back but eat them gratefully. I am practically recovered now & am beginning all ordinary employments again. If you have really sat in influenza do be careful afterwards. I got up thinking I was all right & then collapsed again after 2 or 3 days. I'm sure that's the dentist's part of that disease. Also do feed

up afterwards. I fear it might be easy to do now but you can get such things as you sent me. Here we have eggs too. & I'm going to start keeping rabbits. If starvation sets in I really think you'll have to come & weather the seige at Ashcham. I'm sure we'd much better off in the country. We're going to keep all the ducks & hens we can & rabbits. besides growing potatoes etc. all of which you could do at Ashcham.

It's awful being cut off from one's principal occupation isn't it? I'm thankful to be able to paint again. One gets that tetchy without it. & off one's balance.

Do you remember Gow

promise of coming here in February. When are you going to keep it? I will be amused I think at the new régime here. Mrs B. is really very nice & will I expect get the better of Julian eventually. Though as I daresay Duncan told you they have already come to blows. However she did get the better of him then. It's amusing & sometimes rather painful to watch his taming.

I hope me Jay though I shall have a pair of polite & well behaved boats. Julian was of course very much pleased by the books you sent him. especially as he had very few presents I had at least been able to get & give him anything. & had made

mistake two about the day
so it all had to be rather
patched up at the last
moment & yours parcel
was very welcome. I believe
he's considering a letter of
thanks.

Do you know anything about
Harriet Martineau & her works?
I'm rather fascinated by her
autobiography. She was circa
so right-minded & so unpleasant.
You see what works one's
reduced to reading in the
winter evenings in the country.
I find autobiographies absorbing
I wish you'd write yours!

I suppose if I give all I
shant get more gossips yet.
Virginia Duncan & I laughed
over the last batch till we nearly
cried. Have you seen Saxon
lately? He writes rather melancholy
letters. poor old thing. Though very
high-minded of course & full of

(93 ii)
the most unselfish problems.
I think your description of
the conversation à trois must
have been exactly true to life.
Lord. what characters. I
myself think Barbara has
behaved idiotically & wicked like
to repeat it. but there's
no use saying so now.
But how any one with the
imagination of an owl can
conceive of life as she con-
ceives it passes me. half
the year with me. half
with the other. a child by
each. &c. & no one to
have any jealousy or cause
for complaint. & she like a
soothing glass in the middle
reflecting each in turn.
Poor old Salvin of course sees
that it won't be so. He
wish he too like the poor old

bachelor, faithful & solitary
in Sq. Ormond Sq. long after
we're all dead, supporting
Barbara's children (by Nick)
I daresay.

Please thank Leonard
for writing to me & tell
him I'd be very glad of
more news & I hope
you're behaving yourself.
I expect I shall come
to London before long.

Yours VB